

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 58

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 150

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 58—Relative to foster youth.

[Filed with Secretary of State September 21, 2006.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL’S DIGEST

ACR 58, Parra. Foster youth.

This measure would recognize that the rights of foster youth are critical to ensuring their well-being and future, and would urge the State Departments of Social Services, Education, Health Services, and Mental Health, as well as other designated entities, to develop practices to assist foster youth in understanding their rights and available resources.

WHEREAS, Ninety-five thousand foster youth are in care in California. In removing a child from his or her family and placing that child in foster care, the state and counties assume enormous responsibility. Both the state and counties commit to protecting these children and ensuring that these children thrive and develop the skills, supports, and enduring relationships that will sustain them into adulthood; and

WHEREAS, Foster youth are uniquely vulnerable, because they are completely dependent on the state to meet their needs, and require additional protection, resources and support to make a successful transition to adulthood; and

WHEREAS, The Legislature has recognized the importance of the rights of foster youth by enacting numerous measures to ensure and strengthen those rights, and has further expressed the intent to ensure that the rights of children in out-of-home placement are preserved and not infringed upon; and

WHEREAS, The Legislature has recognized the need to expand the foster youth bill of rights to include specific education and higher education rights, noting that education is the foundation and key to self-sufficiency for many foster youth; and

WHEREAS, If members of the child welfare community and the public are unaware of the rights of foster youth, they are unable to meet their collective responsibility to ensure foster youth are cared for and have adequate access to information; and

WHEREAS, Foster youth often lack access to information about their rights and available resources in their community. When youth are aware of their rights in foster care, they are able to self-advocate, which is critical to their success. It is necessary that all foster youth know that they have specific rights, and that they know they can call the Office of the State Foster Care Ombudsperson if there is a violation of those rights; and

WHEREAS, Education outreach by the state and local foster care ombudsperson offices to foster youth and the child welfare community needs to be consistently supported to ensure that the rights afforded foster youth are meaningful. In recent years, the travel abilities of the Office of the State Foster Care Ombudsperson have been limited due to budget concerns; and

WHEREAS, Nearly one in every four calls to the Office of the State Foster Care Ombudsperson reports a violation of a foster youth's rights. There is a need to expand the scope of the Office of the State Foster Care Ombudsperson to include the ability to independently report to the public and the Legislature regarding the concerns and complaints of foster youth; and

WHEREAS, Two promising steps toward the ensuring that foster youth are informed of their rights and have access to the resources needed to be successful are the creation of local foster care ombudsperson offices and the centralization of all resources to foster youth in a "one stop center"; and

WHEREAS, All individuals in the child welfare community share responsibility for ensuring that foster youth know their rights and are informed of available education, employment, housing, health, and financial resources; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate thereof concurring, That the Legislature recognizes that the rights of foster youth are critical to ensuring their well-being and future; and be it further

Resolved, That the Legislature urges the State Department of Social Services, the State Department of Education, the State Department of Health Services, the State Department of Mental Health, the County Welfare Directors Association of California, the National Association of Social Workers, the California Judicial Council, the California State Foster Parent Association, the California Alliance for Children and Family Services, and the California Chief Probation Officers Association to develop practices that assist foster youth in understanding their rights and the resources available to support them both in foster care and as they transition out of the foster care system; and be it further

Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.